O devoted lovers of well-formed letters, would God that some noble heart would occupy itself in establishing & ordering by rule our French language! By this means many thousands of men would strive often to make use of good, honest words. If it be not so established and ordered, we shall find that from fifty years to fifty years the French language will be in large part changed for the worse. The language of to-day is changed in numberless ways from the language as it was fifty years since, or thereabout. The author of the *Book of Chess* said in his time *Neantplus,* & we say *Non plus;* he said *Bien est voir,* & we say, *Bien est vray;* in like manner, he said, *Tenroit, Ne volt pas,* and *Le voyeu,* & we say *Tiendroit, Ne veult pas,* & *La vocale.* He said a thousand other things, which I omit for brevity's sake. One could find tens of thousands of such words and phrases abandoned & changed, of which a hundred authors made use in times gone by. In those times they wrote *Herper* for *Jouer de la Herpe;* they said *Assembler a son ennemy,* for *Commancer a combatre; Lance roidde sus le faultre,* for *Lance mise sus larrest,* and *Sonner des Gresles a lassault,* for *Sonner des Trompettes; Estre affesse* meant *Estre apoysanty; Ne vous deueille* stood for *Ne vous deplaise; Remettre son espee en son feurre* for *Remettre au fourreau; Forconseiller,* for *Malconseiller; Tourbillonner,* for *Faire grant vent:* and many other similar examples which might be set down, & of which one could make a large volume.* I should have ground to deplore the sterility of our handiwork; but I hope that by God's grace some noble Priscian, some Donatus, or some French Quintilian will soon be born, if he be not already in existence.

I find, further, that there is another kind of men who corrupt our language even more. They are the Innovators and Coiners of new words. If such coiners are not pandars, I regard them as little better. Do but consider with what good taste they say after drinking, that their brain is all *encornimatibule & emburelicoque dung tas de mirilifiques & triquedondaines, dung tas de gringuenaudes & guylleroches qui les fatrouillent incessamment.* I would not have set down such foolish words, had it not been that the contempt born of thinking of them made me do it.

Si natura negat, facit indignatio versum.† (Indignation compels me to show their foolishness.) I think that there is no way fitly to make over such language, for those persons who coin it are incapable of sound reasoning. However, if our tongue were duly conformed to rule, and polished, such ordure could be ejected. Wherefore, I pray you, let us all enhearten one another, and bestir ourselves to purify it. All things

* *Tory's spellings, it will be noticed, are in most cases very different from those now in use; but in this matter he himself, like all writers of his time, was far from consistent. 'Vocale' was used in the sense of 'vowel' a hundred years after Tory wrote, although 'voyelle,' the word now used in that sense, had then come into the language. 'Harper' meaning 'to play upon the harp,' is found in Voltaire.*

† *Juvenal, 'Satires,' 1, 79. Tory gives a far-away paraphrase of the text after quoting. The sense is: 'If nature denies the power to write verse, wrath produces it.'*

have had a beginning. When one shall have treated of the letters, and another of the vowels, a third will appear, who will explain the words, & then will come still another, who will set in order the fine discourse. Thus we shall find that, little by little, we shall traverse the long road, and shall come to the vast fields of poesy and rhetoric, full of fair and wholesome & sweet-smelling flowers of speech, & can say downrightly and easily whatsoever we wish.

At Paris

In all things your Geofroy Tory of Bourges.

The sheets of this book are fourteen in number, and each of them is of three folios, except the first and last, which are of four each.

[*This collation of the original edition of 'Champ Fleury' does not, of course, apply to the arrangement of the present volume.*]

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